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Configurations of actual and perceived motor competence among children: associations with motivation for sports and global self-worth

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Abstract

Objectives: Positive relationships among perceived motor competence (PMC), motivation for sports and global self-worth have been identified in previous studies by means of variable-centered analyses. However, it remains unclear how actual motor competence (AMC) relates to both correlates. To gain more insight into the role of both AMC and PMC in terms of motivation and self-worth, the present used a person-centered approach aiming at a) investigating if different combinations of AMC and PMC exist, and b) exploring how children with different types of MC-based profiles might differ in terms of quality of motivation for sports and global self-worth.

Methods: 161 children (40% boys; age= 8.82 ± 0.66 y) completed validated questionnaires to assess PMC and global self-worth (SPPC), and motivation for sports (BREQ). Children's AMC was assessed with the KTK. Person-centered analyses were used to identify different MC-based clusters. Multilevel regression analyses were conducted to investigate differences between clusters in terms of motivation and global self-worth.

Results: Four clusters could be retained: two groups were characterized by relatively high or low levels of both AMC and PMC (i.e. high-high, low-low), in addition we also identified children with relatively high AMC but relatively low PMC (high-low), and children with relatively low AMC but relatively high PMC (low-high). Children with relatively low PMC displayed significantly lower levels of autonomous motivation for sports ($\beta=3.88$; SE=.15 and $\beta=4.07$; SE=.15 respectively) than children with relatively high PMC; ($\beta=4.55$; SE=.12 and $\beta=4.43$, SE=.12), independent from whether these low levels of PMC were combined with high levels of AMC or not. A similar result was found for global self-worth.

Conclusion: The results show that children with low PMC are less motivated for sports and have a lower global self-worth than children with high PMC, even if they have high AMC. These findings emphasize that developing children's PMC seems crucial to stimulate their motivation for sports and their global self-worth.